

THE DEMOCRATIC IDEAL



MILTON REED



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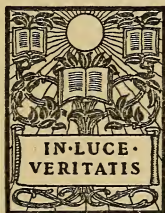


The Democratic Ideal

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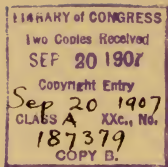


BY MILTON REED



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THIS little book is dedicated to the memory of my parents, who taught their children to revere the principles upon which the American Republic is founded, and who, with millions of their fellow-countrymen, believed in it as the safeguard and nourisher of the Democratic Ideal.

The benign influence of good laws under a free government, the ever favorite object in my heart.

Washington

Plowing up in earnest the interminable average fallows of humanity, — not good government merely, in the common sense, — is the justification and main purpose of these United States.

Walt Whitman

The true democracy is that which permits every individual to put forth his maximum strength.

Pasteur

The nation that has the schools has the future.

Bismarck

Principles are the seed to be sown in this field of time. The order of nature, which is God's providence, will mature the fruit.

Horace Mann

The only final strength is rightness.

Ruskin

There is nothing so mischievous in the people's choice as the existence of any human power capable of resisting it.

Burke

In the infancy of nations, man forms the State; in their maturity the State forms the man.

Montesquieu

History embraces ideas as much as events and derives its best virtue from regions beyond the sphere of State.

Lord Acton

It is not the number of the people that makes a great nation; a great nation is a nation that produces great men.

Lord Beaconsfield

When the church is social worth,
When the State House is the hearth,
Then the perfect State is come,
The republican at home.

Emerson

One thought ever at the fore —
That in the Divine Ship, the World, breast-
ing Time and Space,
All Peoples of the globe together sail, sail
the same voyage, are bound to the
same destination.

Walt Whitman

The Democratic Ideal



THE DEMOCRATIC IDEAL

THE shrewd saying of the Swedish Chancellor Oxenstiern, *An nescis, mi fili, quantilla prudentia regitur orbis?*—"Dost thou not know, my son, with how little wisdom the world is governed?" has been substantially true in every epoch in the world's history. Everything human must needs be imperfect, and in nothing is imperfection more plainly exhibited than in the successive schemes of government which men have attempted. Some have been broad-based and have lasted for what we, in our ordinary reckoning, call a long period of time. But most of them have been built on the sand; a few storms, shocks, convulsions, and they have fallen. Men have generally made but sorry work in trying to govern each other. The individual may govern him-

❧ THE DEMOCRATIC IDEAL ❧

self after a fashion ; but to try to govern wisely another man, or, harder still, great masses of men, even where there has been community of public interests, of language, religion and customs,— ay, there has been the rub. Human history has often been called a great tragedy ; but no tragic element is more ghastly or more overwhelming than the catastrophes in which most governments have collapsed. Ambitious attempts at world-power, the most splendid combinations to group nations into a civic unity, have tottered to their fall, as surely as the little systems which have had their day and ceased to be, — shifting, fleeting, impotent.

It is not difficult to see why this has been so. Social life is only one phase of the great organic life of the species ; one scene of the human drama of which the earth has been “ the wide and universal theatre.” Change, transition, development, birth, growth, death, are universal elements in the cosmic order. Of the

THE DEMOCRATIC IDEAL

slow but inevitable changes in the physical history of the earth, Tennyson says : —

*“ There rolls the deep, where stood the tree ;
O earth, what changes hast thou seen !
There where the long street roars, has been
The stillness of the central sea.”*

*“ The hills are shadows, and they flow
From form to form ; and nothing stands ;
They melt like mists, the solid lands ;
Like clouds they shape themselves and go.”*

If this mutation be true of organic changes in the physical earth, working through immeasurable æons, it is even as dramatically true of organized social life.

We are learning to take a new view of history. It is no longer regarded as a collection of isolated facts. Veracious history is a record of the orderly progression of events, developed by evolutionary processes. There is in it no break, no hiatus, excepting such temporary interruptions as come from what Emer-

❧ THE DEMOCRATIC IDEAL ❧

son calls "the famous might that lurks in reaction and recoil." Thus we learn the rationale of the events transcribed to the historical page. Until science lifted the curtain on "the eternal landscape of the past" man knew little of himself or of his kind. It is only with the enlarged vision that has come to us from the researches of the ethnologist, biologist, anthropologist, sociologist, that we have begun to learn what a creature man really is; to study his inner nature; to get at the deeper meanings of the history of the race.

Once the study of history was thought to be hardly more than learning a catalogue of royal dynasties; the names of famous generals and statesmen; of battles lost and won; of court intrigues; of the vicissitudes of kingdoms; of the prowess of pioneers and adventurers; of "hair-breadth 'scapes i' the imminent deadly breach"; of "the pride, pomp and circumstance of glorious war!" Such incidents have not lost, and never can lose, their

☞ THE DEMOCRATIC IDEAL ☞

interest. They are an integral part of the human document and must always be studied. When draped with myth and legend they minister to "the vision and faculty divine" of the poet; visualize the possibilities of human courage; stimulate the affections; answer to the eternal cravings of the imagination. But they are only the phenomena of the real history of the race. Life is broader, larger, deeper, richer, fuller, than a mere transcript of happenings, — externals, results, — important as they are. We must get at the causes, motives, interrelations, the hidden sources from which events spring before we can unravel the web in which they are woven, and thus interpret them.

The core of history is the element which the Greeks called τὸ ἀνθρωπείον (*to anthropeion*); called by a modern poet "the bases of life"; called by us average folk Human Nature. It is as constant a quality as anything can be in our moving life. We may not be able to agree with Middleton, who says, in his *Life*

❧ THE DEMOCRATIC IDEAL ❧

of Cicero: "Human nature has ever been the same in all ages and nations"; but it is probably true that nothing has changed less in primal qualities than the bases of life. Empires have perished, civilizations vanished, governments have rotted, languages, territorial lines, seemingly sit-fast institutions, have passed into nothingness; but the human element has stood the shock of ages. "The one remains; the many change and pass," said Shelley. Man-character, man-life is the one element, the colors of which seem fast. It is, like all other things, subject to revolutionary changes; it may be differentiated into a thousand forms; but the bases of life have never shifted.

Human history is a great tragedy indeed. But, like all tragedies, it has its spiritualizing, sanctifying, ennobling side. When the drama of the ages is unrolled we see much to make us weep; but we also see immeasurably more to make us glory that we are a part of the race.

THE DEMOCRATIC IDEAL

While its history reeks with blood, carnage, oppression, injustice, cruelty, in which sad facts the pessimist hears "the eternal note of sadness," and unwisely rushes into a denial of the moral order, — it has its sun-bright triumphs of rectitude, and the illuminating picture of the steady and glorious advance of mankind from brutishness into an orderly, moralized life.

Readers of Matthew Arnold, — an author whose intellectual vision was great, and whose style is one of the literary ornaments of the last century, — will recall how he was taken with what he called "Mr. Darwin's famous proposition" that "our ancestor was a hairy quadruped, furnished with a tail and pointed ears, probably arboreal in his habits." Mr. Arnold, the apostle of culture, played again and again around this sonorous phrase. Far be it from me to enter upon any discussion of the Darwinian hypothesis of the genesis of the human race. On this large theme the last word

❧ THE DEMOCRATIC IDEAL ❧

has not been said. Knowledge must grow from more to more before we can posit anything definite on a subject veiled at present in inscrutable mystery. But, in its essence, the evolutionary theory has soaked into our modern thought. The literature and the progressive teaching of our latter day are drenched with it. It certainly can be said of it, that it explains many things which have heretofore seemed inexplicable, and marks a great advance in popular intelligence. But the most ambitious generalization is only a temporary expedient. Fact will merge in fact; law will melt into a larger law; one deep of knowledge will call unto another deep; much that the proudest scientist of our day calls knowledge will vanish away; many theories now popular will be dissected and pruned, and will be found to be "such stuff as dreams are made on," before the most enlightened humanity of a future age catches any one phase of nature in its snare and compresses it into rigid laws.

THE DEMOCRATIC IDEAL

Nevertheless, the ancestor of man was brutish, and his descendants are where they are. Whether or not primeval man was the rather unpicturesque creature described by Mr. Arnold, he was the norm from which has come "the heir of all the ages."

From the cave-dweller, the aboriginal savage, have been evolved Homer, Plato, Aristotle, Shakespeare, Spinoza, Milton, Dante, Newton, Gladstone, Pascal, La Place, Lincoln, Emerson, Channing, Martineau, Thomas à Kempis, Phillips Brooks, Darwin and Herbert Spencer. How magnificent the ascent! How glorious the progression!

Man, once the companion of the

Dragons of the prime

That tare each other in their slime,

has flowered into an intellectual, reasoning, moral being, — "how infinite in faculty; in form and moving how express and admirable; in action how like an angel; in apprehension how like a god!"

❧ THE DEMOCRATIC IDEAL ❧

All this progress, however, has cost its price. Step by step has the race advanced from primeval animalism to its present status. It has walked with bleeding feet. The Divine economy works in many ways. One of its ways is to educate, stimulate and spiritualize through antagonism and pain. All faculties, functions and potencies must be worked in order that they may grow. Atrophy, decay, death, are the resultant of non-use. The sullen earth was to be fertilized by man's sweat and blood, before it would yield any increase beyond its spontaneous productions. Conflict with the elements, conquest over the lower organisms, ages of toilsome effort, were to come before man was able "to dress the earth and to keep it." Out of the iron necessities of his being came initial progress; and progress once begun has never ceased.

The great factor in progress was coöperation. One man alone can do little. The moment human necessities were recognized, the

THE DEMOCRATIC IDEAL

law of association applied. Man needed man. The family group, the clan, the tribe, the town, the city, the state, the nation, have been stages in the process of closer and closer co-operation.

Confederation, association, combination, require adjustment, compromise, regulation. Hence the germ of government. To live together each man must give way in something to the other. Man is gregarious ; he is naturally social ; instinctively he availed himself of the companionship of other men. The social status, the *foedera generis humani*—" the ties that unite the human family," — were slowly evolved from the increasing demands of man upon man ; they were not the result of bargaining.

What a magnificent drama ! the world the theatre ; all mankind, emerging from primitive ignorance, the actors. How many or how long the acts were, we know not ; — but through " that duration which maketh pyra-

❧ THE DEMOCRATIC IDEAL ❧

mids pillars of snow, and all that's past a moment," — the wonderful scenes moved on. Out of the strong came forth sweetness. From brutal selfishness, from animal passion, came love. Slowly the central idea was reached, and, in the sublime language of the Scripture, man became a living soul, and his body became the temple of the Holy Spirit ; his consciousness a part of the infinite consciousness ; his personality a world-copy of a divine universe. Reason, conscience, love, were his dower.

The curtain has not yet fallen, and will never fall, upon the last act. We live in a world which is always in process. Nature's genesis is unceasing. "Without haste, without rest," her creative and re-creative processes are always operating.

❧ When one undertakes to talk about government he is drawn instinctively to some historic models. As thinking persons realized in every age the insufficiency of contemporaneous governments, there has scarcely been a

❧ THE DEMOCRATIC IDEAL ❧

time when the academic reformer was wanting. Certain ages may have lacked poets, — ours is said to be unpoetic and prosaic, and to await its poet-prophet ; but the academic idealist who could say, “ Go to, let us build a government,” has been generally at hand. The dreams of the illuminated ones who have sought, by rule and theory, to make the crooked straight, to convert mankind into angels by legal enactment, are among the most pleasing, if abortive, works of genius. Some of the noblest spirits of the race have made this illusory effort.

Plato, that splendid genius, in whose brain was wrapped the subtle essence which gave to Hellenic art and literature their incomparable charm, found a congenial theme in painting his ideal Republic. It was a beautiful attempt to develop a republic based upon Socratic thought. He had sat at the feet of the great master of dialectic, and, with the hot enthusiasm of a reformer, painted a picture of

❧ THE DEMOCRATIC IDEAL ❧

the idealized man, living in a community where the supremacy of the intellect was recognized as authoritative, where the individual and family were to be absorbed in the state, and where a lofty communism was to be established, and in which Virtue, Truth, Beauty and Goodness were to be entities. But the Platonic Communism was one where equality and humanity were left out. Plato could not escape the Time-Spirit. The Platonic Republic was his Athens idealized. The very age and body of the time gave to the philosopher's dream its form and pressure. The actual Hellenic Republics were not based upon the rights of man ; a few ruled over a nation of proletariats and slaves. When they came into rough contact with the vigorous Roman civilization, they were shattered like iridescent bubbles. Even so wise-browed a philosopher as Plato failed to recognize sufficiently the human element. His imaginary republic was air-drawn, fantastic ; a philosophic dream, with little

❧ THE DEMOCRATIC IDEAL ❧

grasp on life's realities. It was not broad-based. It did not recognize sufficiently the law of growth. It had no place in our work-a-day world. It interests us now chiefly from the superb literary skill with which it was constructed: a prodigy of intellect and art. But it was not the democratic ideal.

Aristotle, — that other imperial Greek genius, whom Dante called “the master of those that know,” — who had less imaginative mysticism than Plato, but a stronger hold on realities, — whose fertile genius touched almost every subject that came within ancient thought, — tried his hand also in political science. As a forerunner of modern science, as a profound thinker, he has been a tremendous factor in the intellectual life of the world. But the Time-Spirit held him in its grasp even more firmly than it did Plato. His theory of the state avoided, indeed, the absurdity of communism, but recognized slavery and the subjection of women. Like many of

❧ THE DEMOCRATIC IDEAL ❧

the modern Socialists, he denounced the taking of interest for the use of money. Such political theories must needs be ineffective. They ignore the equitable basis of society and indicate a short-sightedness that is amazing in any era when thrift, industry and property rights are elements in the life of a state, — as they were then and are now.

Among the school-men of the middle ages, Aristotle was regnant. His hand has not yet been lifted from our university life. Vast literatures had their birth in his philosophic system. His political theories have become only academic. The world has had no use for them. He was far from the democratic ideal. No one will deny that Plato and Aristotle are among those

*Dead but sceptered sovereigns who still rule
Our spirits from their urns.*

Their sovereignty does not come, however, from their contributions to political science.

❧ THE DEMOCRATIC IDEAL ❧

I wish we might dwell longer on these dreams of philosophers. They offer a field for delightful study. We linger lovingly with them. How tenderly we read of the pious dream of St. Augustine for the *Civitas Dei*, the City of God; of a Christianized social order rising on the crumbling ruins of the Roman Empire. The advent of Christianity had brought into the world the auroral flush of a new moral order, a quickened sense of social duty; a warmth of human brotherhood; a heightened conscience. The church was rising like a splendid mausoleum over the sepulchre of its founder. The world thrilled with an emotion never felt before. What more natural than that a new social order should arise, into which should be gathered all classes of men, glorified, purified, ready for the advent of the conquering Galilean, which was then almost universally anticipated. But alas, the Augustine City of God has not come as a human status. It will never come as a polit-

❧ THE DEMOCRATIC IDEAL ❧

ical organization. Its home is in the human heart. It is not *Lo* here or *Lo* there; and cometh not with observation. The City of God, the City of Light, will come when ethical consciousness is so quickened that law becomes love and love, law.

We might go on and say more of the exalted dreamers who from age to age have attempted the impossible task of idealizing the State by geometric rules or fantastic theories. Perhaps the two most notable, — at least until the recent expansion of Socialistic propaganda, — were the Utopia of Sir Thomas More and the New Atlantis of Lord Bacon. We must dismiss them by naming them. They lacked the democratic ideal. Yet, among the many gems which Lord Bacon has given to our language, — those short, terse phrases which make him one of the most quotable of authors, — is one memorable line in his “New Atlantis.” He said of the Father of Solomon’s House, — “He had an aspect as

THE DEMOCRATIC IDEAL

though he pitied men." Benignant and blessed thought!

One, however, of the world's intellectual sovereigns, who lived in the uplands of the imagination, who traversed the gamut of human experience, and of whom we may say, if of any man, — "he saw life steadily and saw it whole," in dealing with the relation of man to the civic order, never indulged in illusions, — William Shakspeare. It has often been said to his reproach that his dramas are not instinct with the spirit of liberty; that he believed in the right of the strongest to rule; that he deified strength and power; that he showed contempt for the mob and "rabblement." We cannot go into a discussion of this interesting matter. We must remember, however, a fact that is often overlooked, — that Shakspeare was not only most extraordinary as a poet, but that he was one of the profoundest moralists that the world has known. His genius was supremely sane, calm, judicial, healthy.

❧ THE DEMOCRATIC IDEAL ❧

He painted men and women as they are. His nobly poised intellect and acute vision saw the realities of life. He knew the exalted possibilities of spiritual excellence to which humanity can rise, and the abysmal depths into which it can sink. He recognized the fact that society is swayed by selfish interests oftener than by a devotion to high ideals. He read history with a microscopic eye. Dowden, one of his most acute interpreters, says: "Shakspeare studied and represented in his art the world which lay before him. If he prophesied the future it was in the ordinary manner of prophets, but only by completely embodying the present, in which the future was concerned." In his day the mob had not learned self-control, moral dignity, a discrimination between the transient and permanent in politics. Has it learned this lesson yet? His immortal works exhibit no world-weariness, no blasé pessimism. He saw the eternal relations of cause and effect. He

❧ THE DEMOCRATIC IDEAL ❧

admired the intellectual powers and tremendous personalities of great historical characters like Julius Caesar, Coriolanus and Richard III, but he also saw their limitations, moral delinquencies and weaknesses, which led inevitably to the snares into which they fell. He had a profound sympathy with human life; he was a lover of rectitude, nobility of character, self-sacrifice, manliness, womanliness. Above all, he taught the everlasting and all-embracing equity with which the universe throbs. In the end, no cheat, no lie, no injustice prospers. The sinner is a self-punisher. At last, by action of the inexorable, inescapable moral order, "the wheel is come full circle," evil is strangled.

To such an equitable intellect the idea of a Platonic Republic or New Atlantis would be as impossible as impracticable. He knew too well the plasticity of human adjustments, the shifting, fleeting, rising and sinking of the social order, — the possibilities of dis-

❧ THE DEMOCRATIC IDEAL ❧

turbance and recoil that ever lie at the core of a placid and smug order of things, — to attempt any speculative panacea for the evils of society. He laid open the tap-root of all institutions and happenings, — the human heart.

✓ This is a digression ; but a strange fascination invests the name of Shakspeare. Thackeray said of the insanity of Dean Swift : “So great a man he seems to me, that thinking of him is like thinking of an empire falling.” So when we talk of Shakspeare, it almost seems that we are talking of collective humanity. He was no economic idealist ; he built no systems of philosophy or law. He understood humanity. In spite of all criticisms, his view of life followed more closely than the pretentious systems of closet philosophers, the gleam of the democratic ideal ; — progression and growth.

❧ THE DEMOCRATIC IDEAL ❧

We may consider government, or rather the social organism, as a working basis on which men manage to live together, receiving from and giving to each other protection for life and property. There is a noble phrase of Edmund Burke, — he was a master of noble phrases, — “Moulding together the great mysterious incorporation of the human race.” In order to have any basis on which human beings could live together, there must have been a moulding together of immense diversities. Human nature and human society are tremendously complex. No two persons are just alike; and each personality is a bundle of contradictory qualities. Government rests upon two forces, sovereignty and obedience. Somebody must command; somebody must obey. Each of these forces is powerfully operative in most men. The love of authority, dominion, power, the will to make another do our bidding, is deeply planted in the human nature. Nothing is more intoxicating, more

❧ THE DEMOCRATIC IDEAL ❧

enjoyable, than power. On the other hand, the principle of submission, compliance, obedience, is a stronger force than most of us imagine.

✓ We need not analyze the genesis of the force that has kept men under government. There are almost as many theories as there are inquirers. It has been said to be compulsion,—physical force, by one school of writers; by another school, agreement,—a contractual relation. For many generations a popular theory was that authority is given to rulers by God, or the eternal reason;—this theory cost King Charles I his head. Another school contends that it rests upon some psychological principle inherent in human character. There may be a vast practical difference in results, if some of these theories are pushed to a limit; but that there must be sovereignty in the state, however derived, and obedience to such sovereignty by the citizen, is plain, if anarchy is to be escaped.

❧ THE DEMOCRATIC IDEAL ❧

If we may use the phrase which Herbert Spencer coined and popularized, men naturally follow "the line of the least resistance"; and to obey, — except where obedience is counter to self-interest, or where, in the more highly specialized civilizations, it would violate right, honor, duty, is generally the easy course. The Castle of Indolence seldom has any vacant rooms. The exceptionally strong will, the monarch mind, is rare. The principle of obedience to authority is strongly developed in the race, especially among nations where the supreme power is supposed to rest upon some religious sanction, as was the case with European governments until recent years, and as is the case with most Oriental nations to-day.

We live in an age of intense specialization. A few generations ago we heard of men of universal knowledge. Not so now. The volume of knowledge has become so vast that no man, even the wisest, can do more than to

❧ THE DEMOCRATIC IDEAL ❧

touch its edge. In no department of study is the trend of specialization more active than in the interpretation of history. In the hunt after the subtle causes that have lurked in the bosom of society and have flamed into consuming fire, from time to time, the patient historian, the student of sociology, has grouped tendencies, impulses, transitional waves of popular feeling, into generalizations. Especially is this statement true of German scholars, with whom specialization has often been reduced to infinitesimal analysis. Thus one school of writers dwells upon the economic interpretation of history. In their view, most popular upheavals have been synchronous with the poverty of the masses. It is when the people have been ground into hunger by excessive taxation and public extravagance that they have risen, like the blind giant pulling down the pillars at Gaza, and swept away dynasties and royal pageantry. Such, it is said, was the mainspring of the French Revolution, —

THE DEMOCRATIC IDEAL

one of the most dramatic events in history. Undoubtedly the economic problem has always been, and always will be, a powerful agent in the genesis of history.

Others give us the religious interpretation of history. They tell us of those epochs when great masses of men, impelled by a wave of religious enthusiasm, moved to fiery zeal, their imaginations touched, their moral sense deeply stirred, have become knights of the faith, missionaries armed with fire and sword; the scourges of God. Such causes impelled the Saracenic invasion of Africa and Europe, and the Crusades.

Other historians have studied the great migratory movements that have swept vast bodies of men away from their native environments, and precipitated new elements into history. Such were the migrations of the tribes of Northern Europe, and of the Asiatic hordes which were a powerful element in the overturn of the Roman Empire.

❧ THE DEMOCRATIC IDEAL ❧

In late years there has been an increasing interest in the biographies of the great men who have moved the world. No view of history is more interesting than this study of personalities. It has sometimes been pushed to an absurd extent, in the attempt to reverse historical verdicts, to rehabilitate tarnished reputations, and in the exaggerations of hero-worship. The relation of great men to their times has rightly been a fascinating theme for the historian to dwell upon in every age.

All these, and many more inquiries, are worthy of the most painstaking study. We cannot know too much about them. They are all a part of "the moulding together the great mysterious incorporation of the human race." But the moral lesson of history is larger than any exceptional episodes.

Whatever way governments began,— they have been, they are, and will be, until human nature and human needs undergo a tremendous transformation. As has been said, stable

❧ THE DEMOCRATIC IDEAL ❧

governments have been rare. Some of the forces of modern civilization may make the crystallization of society into localized governments possibly more unstable than ever. In favor of the permanence of any existing order however, there has always been one conserving factor, — habit. Prof. J. M. Baldwin, in his instructive work "Mental Development," calls authority "that most tremendous thing in our moral environment," and obedience "that most magnificent thing in our moral equipment." Psychologists also tell us that habit, one of the phenomena of consolidation, indicates downward growth. With the race, as with the individual, habit, or what Bagehot calls "the solid cake of custom," has been one of the impediments to progress. Yet, governments have progressed. Social progress has proceeded from generation to generation. There has always been enough of the *vis viva* to leaven social heredity. Little by little, that part of the race

❧ THE DEMOCRATIC IDEAL ❧

whose progress has not been arrested has outgrown the superstition of a divinity that doth hedge a king. More and more the functions once held by kingcraft have been grasped by the people; — the race steadily moving toward the ideal of self-government. Every agency that made for enlightenment and uplift led to this goal. The great social heritage of the past has been the evolution of law and order. There has been through the ages a sweep of collective forces that has taught men self-control, and has constantly raised the ethical standard. A *damnosa hereditas* — “a hurtful inheritance” — of ferocity, selfishness, and brutality has been a part of the heritage; but there has been enough of salt in the general character to rescue liberty and justice in the most reactionary times.

The Democratic Ideal is based upon the three great principles of liberty, equality of rights and opportunities, and justice. In spite of indolence, apathy, inveterate conser-

THE DEMOCRATIC IDEAL

vatism, superstition, ignorance, these have been the day-star which the path of civilization has followed.

Liberty is no longer a vagrant. "The love of liberty is simply the instinct in man for expansion," says Matthew Arnold. That instinct is always operative.

Yet liberty is not an entity; it is only a state. Unregulated, discharged from the ethical obligations which we owe to each other, liberty is lost in anarchy, which is only consummate egoism.

"The most aggravated forms of tyranny and slavery arise out of the most extreme form of liberty," says Plato.

"If you enthrone it (liberty) alone as means and end, it will lead society first to anarchy, afterward to despotism which you fear," says Mazzini, one of the shining liberators of the last century.

"If every man has all the liberty he wants, no man has any liberty," says Goethe.

❧ THE DEMOCRATIC IDEAL ❧

In other words, the rights of man must be articulated with the duties of man. Freedom cannot exist without order. They are concentric. Without the recognition of the sanctity of obligation to others, the age-long aspiration of the race for liberty is an impotent endeavor. It would have plunged eyeless through the cycles in which it has worked its way into civilization, had it not been that reciprocity, mutual help, is a basis of its being. Mankind can never be absolved from this eternal law.

We are now told that a reaction has set in against democracy ; that the results of the democratic ideal, so far as attained, are a failure ; that the tyranny of the mob has succeeded to that of the single despot ; that in the most liberal governments of the world, even in the United States and England, where the problem of government has been most

❧ THE DEMOCRATIC IDEAL ❧

thoroughly worked out, the people are forgetting their high ideals and are using their collective power for base and ignoble purposes; that the moral tone of the government is lowered; that an insane greed for wealth has infected the nations; that there is a blunting of moral responsibility and a cheapening of national aims. This great indictment comes from intense lovers of liberty and the truest friends of democracy.

Herbert Spencer put himself on record, in his last years, as fearing that the insolent imperialism of the times and the power of reactionary forces would lead to the re-barbarization of society.

John Stuart Mill said, "The natural tendency of representative government, as of modern civilization generally, is towards collective mediocrity."

John Morley tells us that "outside natural science and the material arts, the lamp burns low"; he complains that nations are listening

❧ THE DEMOCRATIC IDEAL ❧

to "the siren song of ambition ;" that while there is an immense increase in material prosperity, there is an immense decline of sincerity of spiritual interest. He also speaks of "the high and dry optimism which presents the existing order of things as the noblest possible, and the undisturbed sway of the majority as the way of salvation."

If you care to read the summing-up of the tremendous indictment against modern democracy, you will find it in Hobhouse's striking work "Democracy and Reaction." This thoughtful author claims that the new imperialism, which has become an obsession among the great powers of the world within a few years, "stands not for widened and ennobled sense of the national responsibility, but for a hard assertion of racial supremacy and national force," and pleads for "the unfolding of an order of ideas by which life is stimulated and guided," and for "a reasoned conception of social justice."

❧ THE DEMOCRATIC IDEAL ❧

Unfortunately there is too much truth in all these utterances. These are not wild and whirling words. We need not to be told of the evils of our times. We hardly dare turn the searchlight upon our own civilization, for we know how much of shame it reveals. We need no candid, sympathetic, and enlightened critic, like James Bryce, to tell us where our republic is weak, in spite of our Titanic power, immense prosperity, roaring trade, restless energy, chartered freedom. We know that, in many aspects, "the times are out of joint." The sordid and incapable government of many of our large cities; the venality among those to whom great public trusts have been committed; the recrudescence of race-prejudice; the colossal fortunes heaped up by shrewd manipulations of laws — which have been twisted from their original intent — and by unethical methods; — mob-violence, Lynch law, the ever-widening hostility between the employers of labor and

❧ THE DEMOCRATIC IDEAL ❧

the wage-earner; — so much of what Jeremy Taylor called “prosperous iniquity”; the blare of jingoism, the coarser and grosser form which athletics have assumed, even among young men who are students at our universities, — in the sublime words of Milton, “beholding the bright countenance of truth in the quiet and still air of delightful studies”; — the hatred felt by the poor toward the rich, and the disdain felt by the rich for the poor; — all these and many other evils, indeed, exist. Yes, the times are out of joint. But they have always been out of joint.

These evils are not the result of popular government; they are incident to our transitional civilization. They have always existed, probably in a grosser form than to-day. Would a return to monarchical government better things?

Possibly we have anticipated too much of organized democracy. It is still aiming for its ideal. Organized democracy is not a final-

THE DEMOCRATIC IDEAL

ity; it is only a status by which public opinion for the time being can be most effectively expressed in government.

The reaction, if there be one, is moral and spiritual, rather than political. The American people have been densely absorbed in the material development of our wonderful country. The task has been a huge one. So far as it has been completed, it has been magnificently done. If we have seemed to worship the Golden Calf, we may find in due time how unsatisfying wealth-gathering is. If at present the consumer seems to be throttled by the trust magnate on one hand, and the labor-trust on the other, — each monopoly working to the common purpose of keeping up prices to be paid by the consumer, — the remedy is in his own hands. It is not in riot, revolution, anarchy, by frenzied declamations against those who are doing only what nine-tenths of the human kind would do for themselves if opportunity were afforded; but by

❧ THE DEMOCRATIC IDEAL ❧

using the power which free government gives to the people, and correcting the evils by what Gladstone called "the resources of civilization." Out of the roar and brawl of the times will come a sharp examination into the system of laws which permit the accumulation of stupendous fortunes, by the "cornering" of a commodity which human necessities require; by shrewd manipulations of tariff, patent, corporation and transportation laws, and by other anti-social agencies. The people, the consumers, create all the legislatures, appoint all the judges, execute all the laws. The fortunes of the rich exist because the people so allow. "A breath can make them, and a breath has made." All the creature-comforts, all culture-conquests have been evolved by the people. It is not by a reversion to Asiatic paternalism, or by the assumption of all industrial agencies by the State, which is the present aim of Socialism, or by a retreat into aboriginal lawlessness and intense selfishness,

THE DEMOCRATIC IDEAL

— which Anarchism would result in, — that the remedy will come.

The American people will work these problems out and will work them out right. "The glory of the sum of things" does not come with a flash. There are always remedial agencies actively at work. They have saved civilization again and again, when the economic order seemed about to break down, when effete governments have fallen in cataclysms which have almost wrecked the social fabric; when mankind seemed to be wandering in a wilderness of ignorance, doubt and despair. Human nature is a tough, elastic, expansive article. If common sense is a product of the ages, so is what is termed "the corporate morality" of the race. Everything makes for what Burke said he loved, "manly, moral, regulated liberty."

It is hard for us to learn the imperative lesson that everything, except moral and spiritual elements, is only transitional. We are too

❧ THE DEMOCRATIC IDEAL ❧

much inclined to think that any existing status has come to stay. Not so. While evils do not cure themselves, evil is only the negative of the good. The human agent, with his enormous plasticity, constantly widening intelligence, and marvelous capacity for growth, is always the instrument, guided by the unseen powers that make for rectitude, to strangle wrong. There is always more good than evil; otherwise society could not hold together. If progress has been slow, it is because it ought to be slow.

In our economic order, the trust, the trade-unions, — often in our day instruments of danger, — are factors that in the end will tend to good. They are a part of the great synthetic movement which is unifying the race. They will lead to a greater coherency in our industrial life. They are educational in their tendency. Great fortunes, dizzying wealth, have their evil side; they are monstrous creations which have been caused by a union of

❧ THE DEMOCRATIC IDEAL ❧

constructive talent and the mechanical inventions of the age. By and by their possessors may see that they are but ashes ; intolerable burdens ; gilded rubbish. But in our present stage there is need of wealthy men. They have important uses. Business has heretofore been too largely directed to the acquisition of wealth. This grossness will be succeeded by an era of equitable distribution.

We must remember that the very idea of property implies more or less of selfishness. An ideally altruistic man could not acquire property beyond his immediate needs. What view of it may be taken in future ages we know not. At present, however, it is absolutely necessary. To protect life and liberty, government must protect property. Undoubtedly the possession of enormous wealth, thereby generating sharp distinctions between classes, is inimical to the democratic ideal. Democracy presupposes a tolerable measure of equality in possessions, and an absence of

❧ THE DEMOCRATIC IDEAL ❧

class privilege. The people must perhaps recast much of their legislation, to make sure that their public franchises and natural monopolies are not exploited by the few at the expense of the many. In a country where the press is allowed unlimited freedom, and where every man has a share in the government, where laws are easily modified, there should be little difficulty in curbing the pretensions of insolent wealth and protecting the people from lawlessness.

Possibly in the Socialistic movement, which is now academic, crude and unscientific, and which, in its present stage, offers as a healing balm for industrial evils only the paralysis of state despotism, there may be a curative germ. Certainly, at its base, is the principle of human brotherhood, cooperation and a lofty altruism. It is now in antagonism with the democratic ideal; ultimately it may be resolved into an auxiliary in purging society from some of the evils with which it is infected.

THE DEMOCRATIC IDEAL

If we live in an era of greed and graft, we also live in an era of enormous goodness, unparalleled philanthropy, increasing intelligence and advancing ethical standards. Can there be any doubt which forces will win?

The Democratic Ideal, towards which all nations are drifting by the inexorable sweep of ethical forces, still shines before the American people. Whatever is rotten, vulgar, base, corrupt, in our body politic will be purged by the same law of progress, moral, physical, social, spiritual, which has brought the race to its present transitional status. Lincoln's ideal of a government, of the people, for the people, by the people, will not perish from the earth. Up from the scum and reek of corruption, — unless the ancient power of conscience and intellect are dead, and they are not dead, but live in deathless vigor, — will spring a new growth of justice, liberty, love.

But the nation must not lose its vision, — that incommunicable quality that leads to the

THE DEMOCRATIC IDEAL

light. "Where there is no vision, the people perish."

The past is behind us, with all its solemn monitions. The future beckons us to the shining uplands of limitless progress. The ascent is not easy, but it must and will be made.

*O mountain-born, sweet with snow-filtered air
From uncontaminate wells of ether drawn
And never-broken secrecies of sky,
Freedom, with anguish won, misprized till lost,
They keep thee not who from thy sacred eyes
Catch the consuming lust of sensual good
And the brute's license of unfettered will.*

J. R. LOWELL, "*The Cathedral*."

*O Beautiful! my Country! ours once more!
Smoothing thy gold of war-dishevelled hair
O'er such sweet brows as never other wore,
And letting thy set lips,
Freed from wrath's pale eclipse,*

THE DEMOCRATIC IDEAL

*The rosy edges of their smile lay bare,
What words divine of lover or of poet
Could tell our love and make thee know it,
Among the Nations bright beyond compare?
What were our lives without thee?
What all our lives to save thee?
We reck not what we gave thee!
We will not dare to doubt thee,
But ask whatever else, and we will dare!*

J. R. LOWELL, "Commemoration Ode."

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